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18 October 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing on Soviet Leadership Issues for Senate Foreign
Relations Committee Staffer Diana Smith

1. On 18 October 1984, Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer Diana Smith was briefed on Soviet leadership issues by [redacted] Deputy Division Chief, DI/SOVA/Policy Analysis Division. Ms. Smith was given an overview of the Soviet succession process from the death of Brezhnev in 1982 to the installation of Konstantin Chernenko as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. The one-hour briefing covered the political transition period and more recent events related to Chernenko's absences from Moscow due to ill health in the last year.

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[redacted] indicated that he expects Chernenko could hold on to power up to two to three more years, and that it now looks as if Mikhail Gorbachev has a good chance of succeeding Chernenko then or sooner. The conversation covered the status and prospects of various other top Soviet leaders and also the outlook for US-Soviet relations.

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2. Ms. Smith expressed appreciation for the chance to discuss these topics with [redacted] which she has done on a periodic basis during the past several years. [redacted]

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[redacted] is familiar with key Soviet issues through DI publications regularly made available to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. [redacted]

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Liaison Division

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